

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

S E C R E T STATE 279538

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IT

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND THE ITALIAN
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DC)

1. THE PRINCIPAL TASK NOW BEFORE THE ITALIAN CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATIC PARTY IS TO DENY FURTHER GAINS TO THE ITALIAN
COMMUNISTS (PCI) IN THE 1977 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND
TO RECOUP ITS ELECTORAL LOSSES. FAILURE TO DO SO WOULD
LEAVE UNCHECKED THE SECULAR TREND OF THE LAST 20 YEARS:
CONTINUING GAINS FOR THE PCI AT THE EXPENSE OF THE
DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN ITALY, PARTICULARLY THE DC, AND ALL
THAT IMPLIES FOR THE ALLIANCE AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNMENT IN ITALY.

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2. THE US GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT THE CHANCES FOR THE

CONTINUATION OF GOVERNMENT BY THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES UNDER DC LEADERSHIP WILL DEPEND ON THE SUCCESS OF THE DC IN AT LEAST STABILIZING OR PREFERABLY IMPROVING ITS NARROWED ELECTORAL BASE, THEREBY ENHANCING THE CREDIBILITY OF A GOVERNMENT COALITION LED BY THE DC AS THE ONLY VIABLE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE IN ITALY. TO DO SO, THE DC MUST RENEW AND REFORM ITSELF AFTER 30 UNINTERRUPTED YEARS IN POWER.

3. WE HAVE PRESSED AND WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS ITALIAN DC LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS OF MAKE THE NEEDED REFORMS IN THEIR PARTY. BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT US INFLUENCE IN ITALY, WHILE SUBSTANTIAL, WILL NOT BE ENOUGH IN ITSELF TO CONVINCE THE ITALIANS TO DO THE NECESSARY. FIVE MONTHS HAVE ALREADY PASSED SINCE THE JUNE 15 ELECTIONS AND THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF ANYTHING CONCRETE BY THE ITALIANS. THUS, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT OTHER EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES, IN VIEW OF THEIR OWN DIRECT INTERESTS IN DEVELOPMENTS IN ITALY, SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH THE ITALIANS AS WELL.

4. AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN ROME NOVEMBER 28-29, WITH ATTENDANCE FROM THE HOST COUNTRIES OF THE ADDRESSEE POSTS. ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MARIANO RUMOR, IN HIS CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT OF THE DC INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION, WILL PRESIDE OVER THE MEETING. IN OUR VIEW, THE MEETING IS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR OTHER EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO INFLUENCE THE ITALIAN PARTY TO TAKE TIMELY ACTION TO STRENGTHEN ITSELF. FOR THIS REASON, ADDRESSEE POSTS ARE REQUESTED TO CONTACT WITH THE UTMOST DISCRETION PARTY SECRETARIES AND THE PARLIAMENTARY FLOOR LEADERS WHO WILL BE ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE IN ROME, TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS, TAILORING THEM, OF COURSE, TO LOCAL CONDITIONS:

-- LARGE COMMUNIST GAINS IN THE JUNE 15 ITALIAN REGIONAL ELECTIONS RAISE SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF
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DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN ITALY, WITH ALL THIS IMPLIES FOR NATO AND THE OTHER EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES THEMSELVES.

-- THE RESULTS REFLECT DC WEAKNESS AND VULNERABILITY AS MUCH AS THEY DO COMMUNIST STRENGTH AND PURPOSE.

-- AFTER 30 UNINTERRUPTED YEARS IN POWER, THE ITALIAN

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE NOW FACED WITH THE TASK OF
RENEWING AND REFORMING THEIR PARTY TO MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE
TO THE OTHER DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN ITALY.

-- THE ITALIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE RECOGNIZED THE
NECESSITY OF RENEWING AND REFORMING THEIR PARTY AND THEY
HAVE ALREADY TAKEN SOME STEPS IN THIS DIRECTION.

IT SEEMS TO US THAT IT WOULD BE VERY MUCH IN THE SELF
INTEREST OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO

PRESS THE ITALIANS TO UNDERTAKE QUICKLY THE NEEDED
REFORMS AND RENEWAL IF ITALY IS TO CONTINUE TO BE
GOVERNED BY THE FORCES THAT LED IT FROM THE POST-FASCIST
PERIOD TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND CLOSE ASSOCIATION
WITH WESTERN EUROPE.

-- FOR OUR PART, WE ARE ENCOURAGING THE ITALIAN
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO TAKE THE NECESSARY MEASURES TO
STRENGTHEN THEIR PARTY AND IT IS IN THAT DIRECTION WE
WILL CONTINUE TO BEND OUR EFFORTS.

-- AS FOR THE PCI, THE US POSITION REMAINS UNCHANGED
REGARDING OUR OPPOSITION TO THE PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNIST
PARTIES IN THE GOVERNMENTS OF MEMBER STATES OF NATO.

-- THE MEETING OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES IN ROME
NOVEMBER 28-29 APPEARS TO OFFER AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY
FOR EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO RAISE ANY
CONCERNS THEY MAY HAVE DIRECTLY WITH THE ITALIAN DC
LEADERS.

5. POSTS ARE REQUESTED TO KEEP THE DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY
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ROME INFORMED OF THE RESULTS OF ANY APPROACHES THEY MAKE
WITH THE LOCAL DC LEADERS. IF ASKED, YOU MAY SAY THAT
WE ARE MAKING SIMILAR DISCREET APPROACHES ON THIS ISSUE
WITH A FEW OTHER EUROPEAN DC PARTIES AS WELL.

6. FOR ROME: DEPARTMENT HOPES THAT EMBASSY MONITORING
OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE DC CONGRESS IN ROME WILL
INCLUDE APPROACHES MADE BY EUROPEAN PARTIES AND THEIR
EFFECT. KISSINGER

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